

Washington, DC -- Congressman Vern Buchanan (FL-13) introduced legislation today to modernize the Small Business Administration's (SBA) small business counseling program. The SCORE (Service Corps of Retired Executives) program provides entrepreneurs with the small business advice of working and retired executive volunteers.

"For years, SCORE has been providing entrepreneurs with free, confidential, and valuable small business advice," said Buchanan. "With double digit unemployment rates, more people will be trying to start their own business. Their success is vital to our economic recovery. This bill will help ensure that qualified volunteers are available to provide one-on-one advice and counsel to small businesses."

Research shows that Small businesses are five times more likely to start if they get assistance from a government supported program such as SCORE. The "Retired Executives Building Better Businesses Act of 2009" would require SCORE administrators to actively recruit and maintain volunteer mentors and track their success. Counselors would be required to have at least ten years of similar experience.

The chairwoman of the Manasota SCORE Chapter, Jeannette Watling-Mills, testified today in support of Buchanan's bill before the Small Business Subcommittee on Rural Development, Entrepreneurship and Trade.

"SCORE fulfills a vital role for America's small business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs by providing much needed technical assistance," said Mills. "As you know many small businesses continue to struggle with layoffs, access to capital, cash flow and overall management issues. SCORE has a proven track record of both creating and saving jobs by improving business survival rates as well as accelerating small business formation."

Mills noted that SCORE volunteers assisted in the creation of almost 20,000 new small businesses in 2007 and help create more than 25,000 new jobs each year.

"Congressional support of SCORE makes this possible," said Mills.

Watling-Mills is currently the owner of Bob's Window Cleaning, a commercial window cleaning company servicing Sarasota and Manatee counties. She is one of about 50 volunteer consultants who assist entrepreneurs in Manatee and Sarasota Counties by mentoring on a wide range of business issues.

Currently, SCORE has 389 chapters in locations throughout the United States with 10,500 volunteers nationwide.